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SCHOOL READERS.

- ART. IX.—1. *The National Reader*. By John Pierpont. Boston: 1831.
2. *Harper's Series of School and Family Readers*. By Marcius Willson. New York: 1863.
3. *Willson's Intermediate Series: A Third Reader*. 1865. *A Fourth Reader*. 1866. New York: Harper & Brothers.
4. *Notes on Willson's Readers*. By S. S. Haldeman. 1864.
5. *National Series. The National Fifth Reader*. By Richard G. Parker, A. M., and J. Madison Watson. New York: Barnes & Burr. 1865.
6. *Analytical Series*. By Richard Edwards, LL.D., President Illinois State Normal University. New York: Mason Brothers. 1867.
7. *Union Series of Readers*. By Charles W. Sanders, A. M. New York: Ivison, Phinney, Blakeman & Co. 1868.

Although this is a Southern Review, it is not necessarily devoted to Southern as distinguished from universal principles, some of the contributors being Northern citizens with northern views; and the Editors state on the cover of the January number, that their 'Northern friends, by the contribution of able articles, have afforded them valuable assistance.' This fact is alluded to because, by a Northern writer, the article on *Quackery in American Literature* is charged with having an 'unhappy sectional bias,' and is condemned for calling Mr. Emerson a 'Yankee philosopher.'

But this epithet was used several years before the late war by the writer—a Northern man with Northern interests—who from childhood was accustomed to hear certain people called Yankees. Mr. Emerson is considered to be a philosopher, and as his philosophy is chiefly affected in New England, he may

justly be styled the Yankee philosopher. His philosophy appears in the lines —

They reckon ill who leave me out :
When me they fly, I am the wings ;
I am the doubter and the doubt,
And I the hymn the Brahmin sings.

Nevertheless, the reviewer *had* an animus, but not a Southern one. He had a recollection of certain brutal remarks upon the laboring classes, whom Mr. Emerson called ‘shovel-handed’—with other objurgatory epithets now forgotten—showing an absence of those feelings of kindness and sympathy which every right-minded man has for the poor.

We now proceed with the proper subject of our article.

The preparation of a good series of reading books for schools, notwithstanding its apparent simplicity, has its difficulties, from the various positive and negative features which must be kept in view; and had we the choice between furnishing the songs of a people, and the reading books for their children, as means of influencing opinion, we would prefer the latter. In our early days, the English Reader of Lindley Murray was in use, a book which was pitched in too high an intellectual key to benefit the pupil, and after an interval of forty years we can recall but four words from a single piece—the dialogue between Locke and Bayle—‘You dogmatized, I doubted!’ Of course the mode of dogmatizing was not explained, and we were not told who the speakers were, or what particular fact or assertion Mr. Bayle doubted.

While there is no valid reason why the same school books should be used over large districts, or even in the same State, those are best which would be admissible throughout the widest region, and those the least desirable which are local in their nature—an opinion which will influence the direction of this paper. It is conceded that the literary interests of the country are suffering from the want of sufficient public honesty to call for an international copyright code, and, as a consequence, we are flooded with foreign productions of cosmopolitan interest, which are, in most cases, superior to our own. But the benefits arising from these larcenies do not reach the school-going gen-

eration, because the compilers of books like those at the head of this article, instead of being men of culture and enlarged views, are narrow-minded, sectional, and ignorant,—one of them being even illiterate,—and, as a consequence, they reproduce the works of local politicians, orators, clergymen, and writers, who have not a national reputation as literary men, and who cannot be accepted as models of literary style. The productions of a Paley, a Blair, a Macaulay, or a Burke, must always take precedence of those of a Beecher, a Quint, a Headley, or a Sumner.

It is known that Thaddeus Stevens has always been a radical revolutionist, the father of the Buckshot War in Pennsylvania, some thirty years ago, when the troops of Philadelphia (then in the interest of the United States Bank) were called out, armed with buckshot-and-ball cartridges, to keep Ritner (who was under the control of Stevens) in the gubernatorial chair after his defeat at the polls. On this occasion, when a member of the Stevens-Ritner party said his conscience would not allow him to act with them, he was told by Stevens to ‘throw conscience to the devil!’ Although Governor Wolf must be considered as the father of the common-school system of Pennsylvania, and Mr. Breck as the proposer of the first bill to establish it, Mr. Stevens was one of its earliest advocates. But without a proper development, the system would have had but little value, and its salvation was the appointment of the Hon. Thomas H. Burrowes as superintendent, a scholar and a gentleman, an administrator of ability, with a sound judgment upon points of school law which he was called upon to decide under a defective code. Mr. Burrowes is really the true Architect and Builder of the School-system of Pennsylvania, the combined labors of all others providing but the erude materials, the value of which depended upon the mode of putting them together. But Mr. Burrowes has been excluded from the superintendency to make room for a radical politician of the Stevens stamp, who, as a teacher, taught his pupils that the use of the North Star was to guide runaway negroes from slavery, and who, instead of lecturing on education at educational conventions, endeavors to foment a war with England for her part in our late revolution. He was for a number of years the Superintendent of the Normal School at Mil-

lersville, where teachers are taught that Mr. Lyell (!) determined the nature of an animal from a single bone. It is a question, then, whether systems of public instruction have not been regarded by men like Mr. Stevens, as machines to be controlled by superintendents of the Wickersham or Hunnicutt stamp, aided by school books intended to make credulous Americans believe that Boston, in a moral and political sense, is 'The Hub of the Universe.' And as it might be too expensive to disseminate such books by private enterprise, a convention made up largely of Yankee teachers was held a few years ago at Harrisburg for the purpose of having a National Bureau of Education established, with a view to control the education of the country; and probably for the first time in Pennsylvania a negro educator was present to give his views, a circumstance which was sufficiently significant of the intentions of the managers.

The preface and copyright of the first book on our list have the date of 1827, and it was introduced into the schools of Boston in 1829. It was therefore prepared about forty years ago, 'for the *Common Schools of the United States*,' the object of the author being to make it 'a *National Reader*.' (All these italics are his own.) Here we find 'The Worm' (of the Still) credited to the *Missourian*; we have the month of 'March', by Bryant, 'April' by Longfellow, and 'May' by Percival; the 'Burial of Arnold,' and 'Absalom' by Willis; four pieces by Goldsmith, three by Everett, six by Bryant, four by Mrs. Hemans, two by Irving, two by Jefferson, and four by Daniel Webster. The book runs to 276 pages, and contains the following pieces, which indicate pretty well that the meaning of the word *National* at Boston forty years ago did not differ materially from its meaning at Washington since Congress has been acting outside of the Constitution.' 'First Settlement of the Pilgrims in New England;' 'Extract from an Oration delivered at Plymouth;' 'Claim of the Pilgrims to the Gratitude and Reverence of their Descendants;' 'Character of the Puritan Fathers;' 'Account of the Battles of Lexington and Concord;' 'Extract from an Oration delivered at Concord;' 'Account of the Battle of Bunker's Hill;' 'Extract from an Address on Bunker's Hill;' 'Song of the Pilgrims;' 'Landing of the Pilgrims;' 'The

Pilgrim Fathers ;' 'Warren's Address before the Battle of Bunker's Hill ;' 'Hymn commemorative of the Battle of Bunker's Hill,' (where, in reality, no battle was ever fought.)

In the month of August, in 1866, a tale appeared in *Harper's Weekly*, entitled 'Honey' from the name of a female slave who was represented as having been torn from her husband — a tale wrought up in the virulent abolition style, as if to keep up the enmity of the North against the South on the basis of anti-slavery, which had been so potent for evil ; a piece of gratuitous malice, because, as slavery had gone with the war, there was no farther necessity for such highly-wrought productions — unless the South was to be punished for not taking kindly to such literature as the Harpers could furnish. But while such objectionable matter was circulated, Harper's Willson's Readers were on trial, with an oily appeal to the South — supposed to be mollifiable by spurious Northern efforts in the 'sacred cause of science' and the 'aid given by a certain Professor Webster of Virginia (!) in the so-called 'scientific' divisions of those very inaccurate volumes. The passage stands thus —

For valuable aid in several of the scientific divisions of the present work, it affords me pleasure here, as in the preceding volume, to acknowledge my indebtedness to Prof. N. B. Webster, of Virginia ; and while doing this, I would take occasion to express the hope that, however much the citizens of different States and sections may differ in their political views, in the sacred cause of science and popular education, they may ever be united.—*Preface to Harper's Willson's Fifth Reader.*¹

The complacency with which this charlatan talks about 'the sacred cause of science' is only equalled by that of the Harpers themselves, when they insert moral articles in one part of their *Weekly* and indecent advertisements (Vol. I, p. 159,) in another. The fourth production of our list is a review of the second, and is chiefly an account of the abundant crop of errors crowded into these unfortunate volumes, which some malign influence forced, a few years ago, upon the common schools of Maryland. As shown by his reviewer, the author is so illiterate that he does not know the meaning of his technical terms ;

¹ Professor Webster, of *Virginia*, is, we presume, the same who, some time before the war, removed to Alexandria, and made an appeal to the South in behalf of Webster's Dictionary, on the ground that he was a 'citizen of Virginia.'—ED.

he blunders even in transcribing the scientific names he has ventured to insert, and he makes misstatements in probably every science he pretends to present. But notwithstanding the honest criticism to which these books have been subjected, the author persists in his unhallowed practice of preparing books for the deception of the young, for our third title includes two additional Readers which, in manner and matter, in text and engravings, are the counterpart of their predecessors — showing that his ‘sciences’ have not advanced during the last half a dozen years. Some years ago two higher class Readers of the series were promised, to complete the sciences of which fragments were given in the volumes before the public, and although they were announced as *in press*, we are now told that *much of the labor of their compilation* has already been done! And thus the public are put off from year to year with an incomplete series.

In *Harper’s Magazine* (January 1866, p. 258,) the following handsome notice is given: ‘We have at various times spoken of the excellent series of Readers prepared by Mr. MARCIUS WILLSON. The distinctive feature of these is, that Fact takes precedence of Fancy, Science of Imagination’! Next to the so-called science, it is claimed that ‘No other series of Readers makes any approach to this in EXTENT, VARIETY, BEAUTY, and UTILITY of ILLUSTRATIONS.’ (Cover of Intermediate Fourth Reader.) This excellence was to be expected in a series the seventh volume of which is to have a Fine-Art department. Let us look a little into this matter. The first lesson of the Intermediate Series Third Reader is entitled — *What Pictures Teach*, and it describes a finely engraved cut. We read — ‘How plainly good pictures speak to us! How much they show! How much they may teach us, if we will study them well!’ But Mr. Willson, notwithstanding he has a volume on Criticism, Taste, Sculpture and Painting ‘in press,’ has shown himself incompetent to seize the characteristics of the engravings in his own book. The cut alluded to represents a picturesque and sufficiently well-drawn man and boy, but the Harper establishment seem to know nothing about breadth and chiaroscuro, the design being painful to the eye. The boy’s face and leg have the same

tone, where the leg alone should have been light ; his head is a transparent frame through which the sky is seen ; the sky is as light as possible, which by contrast would darken the faces and the man's arm, according to a well known principle which painters understand. How then can Mr. Willson have the audacity to devote a part of his series to the Fine Arts, when he thus outrages the principles of Art? Under the circumstances, the boy's eyes would not be bright to the observer, and yet the lesson says, 'How bright are his eyes!' 'the very picture of health', although as pale-faced as possible. 'Does not his open, cheerful sunny, (*sunny* is the very word!) face show that it is summer time?'! His arms 'are almost as white as the driven snow.' So they are represented, or even whiter. Mr. Willson speaks (p. 98) of the figure of a cricket as 'one climbing up the milk-jug — corrects a popular error — the belief that crickets have voices, and can sing,' but how the cut shows this does not appear.

The teacher who does not read those specimens of American comic journalism entitled '*Yankee Notions*' and the '*Phunny Phellow*,' and who is compelled by a stolid or corrupt Board to use Harper's Willson's Readers — can enliven his pupils by calling attention to the facts put on record by our literary green-grocer, that not only are the blind unable to see 'the green grass,' but that (with his own italics and note of admiration) 'A blind person, when asked what he thought *green* was like, replied, that he thought it was like *the sound of a trumpet*.'

As Honor was the weak point of the jockey in *Gil Blas*, so Science is the weakness of Mr. Willson. In the Fifth Reader there is a feeble treatise on Natural Philosophy, but as the theory of echoes was not explained there, it is taken up in the new or second Third Reader, page 71. Little George *in the fields* cried out 'Ho! ho!' and he *instantly* heard his voice repeated from the *thicket* which was *near* him. Afterwards — 'Foolish fellow!' repeated the voice from the thicket. The thicket, to return four distinct syllables, was not *near*, but probably five hundred feet distant, a distance too great for the return to be heard *instantly* — they would not be returned by an ordinary *thicket* at all.

The Natural Philosophy of the Fifth Reader comes from a Mr. Maynard, who leads the conversation. He is described as

a 'model man and teacher,' 'a devoted student of Nature' with 'a vast fund of information' and 'enthusiasm for the pursuits of science.' We had supposed that such an amount of talent could belong to but one man in New York — that even the enormous wealth of Franklin Square could not secure the conjunction of two such stars — and that Mr. Maynard was but a pseudonym of Mr. Willson himself, who might have wished to relieve himself of the weighty honors of his cyclopean and cyclopædic burdens, and hide himself in a *larva* state, out of view, and yet within view at the same time, like Mr. Emerson's 'Brahma,' or like the 'Occultation of Orion' by Diana, as related by Mr. Longfellow. But we seem to have been mistaken. Mr. Maynard could not have been Mr. Willson. He must have had a separate existence, because, notwithstanding his transcendent and transcendental talents, this Admirable Crichton was not quite perfection, and the intriguants of Franklin Square required that he should be sacrificed. He fell, a victim to avunculism, for America has become so corrupt that *nepotism* is now regarded as but a peccadillo, and nothing short of *avunculism* will cause a sensation. The Harpers had an uncle, their Uncle John, and spite of the tears and concomitant wringings of Mr. Willson, poor Maynard had to pack. He was not sufficiently encyclopædic. Mr. Willson *knew* everything but he could not *do* everything, and he must aid in æsthetic and mechanic matters, pushing the work into circulation, &c. Uncle John is at once installed, and the scientific atmosphere, with the effete New York editions of Brande's Dictionary, Insect Transformations, and other publications of the Harpers, bring him up to his work at once; he does the insects of the Willson's Intermediate Series Third Reader, and he is so learned that (p. 169) he could not only 'tell what kind of butterflies most of the caterpillars that he saw would change into,' but if a chrysalis or cocoon was shown him, Uncle John could tell 'what kind of a butterfly, or moth, would come from it.' 'I suppose the locust mentioned in Matthew was a kind of grass-hopper,' is a remarkable exhibition of caution worthy of Mr. Willson himself. But we must proceed to the companion volume — Willson's Intermediate Series Fourth Reader.

The claim made for accuracy in the scientific cuts cannot be sustained. On page 311, an insect is said to have the 'wings black, with a broad yellow margin,' while in the figure on page 273, fig. 3, the wings and their margin have an equally pale color. In four-winged insects, the hinder wings and hinder legs are attached to the same segment, a characteristic which does not appear in several of the figures on pages 286 and 295. In the dictionaries of Webster and Worcester, although the preface states that the figures of insects are 'drawn with exceeding care,' the word *Asclepias* is given as the name of the various species of milk-weed, yet Mr. Willson (p. 310) gives *Asclepias syriaca* as the name of an insect.

On page 160 there is a lesson without an author, but apparently taken from that worthless book, the *Studies of Nature* by St. Pierre, who recounts impossibilities in exaggerated language, as in this 'Life within a Flower.' He has a microscope—'The base of the flower extended itself, under its magnifying influence, to a vast plain; the threads in the middle seemed columns of massy structure, supporting capitals of gold; and the narrow spaces between were enlarged into walks, parterres, and terraces.' The author paints a scene which, as a whole, has no existence, as any microscopist knows. He saw no columns with capitals, because he could not see the capitol and the column and the vast plain at one view, since they must be brought into focus separately, a fact which any one acquainted with natural philosophy ought to know; but Mr. Willson says that 'this lesson is not a fanciful, but a true description, of what may often be observed within a flower, by the aid of a microscope.'

The story of William Tell (p. 233) is said to be 'founded on fact.' On page 276 we are told that 'the name *locust*, which is derived from the Latin, and means 'a burnt place,' is highly expressive of the desolation caused by these insects.' According to this, 'robust' would mean a burnt oak, and 'combustion' a burnt comb. Page 198 has a reference to 'New England Boys'—a subject of no interest to the country at large; but a selection from *Harper's Weekly* (p. 248) is objectionable because no allusion can be made in respectable families to journals which prostitute their advertising columns to indecency. A

lesson is selected from the New York *Independent*, a journal which is charged with publishing indecent advertisements. Harriet Beecher Stowe, Fanny Fern, J. B. Gough, and Charles D. Shanly appear, the last of whom closes his piece with —

Or, if a broken fetter
From the South his hoof will fit,
Lead in your horse, good farmer,
And I'll iron him with it!

From the nature of these books, there is no occasion to wonder that examples of bad taste or vulgarity should occur like — ‘It was like drawing teeth to get him to go across the room to hand you a book.’ ‘I will show you an old tree, with a *splendid* deep hole in it, which I do not want myself.’ ‘What in the name of wonder has become of it?’ A judicious parent will not allow his children to use such expressions.

Messrs Parker and Watson treat us to examples from Emerson, H. W. Beecher, Seward, Sumner, Orville Dewy, Eliphalet Nott, Wayland, Cheever, Pierpont, G. P. Morris, Longfellow, Percival, Dana, Poe, and others. The following examples are not such as should be presented as models to young people:—

Greek poetry has been likened to the song of the nightingale as she (?) sits in the rich, symmetrical crown of the *palm-tree*, trilling her thick-warbled notes; but even this is less sweet and tender than the music of the human heart.—CHARLES SUMNER

Nature stretcheth out her arms to embrace man, only let his thoughts be of equal greatness. Willingly does she follow his steps with the rose and the violet, and bend her lines of grandeur and grace to the decoration of her darling child. Only let his thoughts be of equal scope, and the frame will suit the picture. A virtuous man is in unison with her works, and makes the central figure of the visible sphere.—R. W. EMERSON.

Dr. Edwards gives us ‘The Pretext of Rebellion’ by S. A. Douglas; ‘New England as a part of the Union,’ and ‘Universal Suffrage,’ by Richard Yates; ‘The Pilgrim Fathers;’ ‘Re-

² We took up this copy of the *Independent* (for June 30, 1864,) expecting to find its mass of shameless and revolting advertisements somewhat abated. But the vilest of the vile advertisements which we know secular papers to have refused over and over again, defile its pages. And this almost side by side with Mr. Beecher’s sermons! On one page a poem entitled ‘The Sword of Christ,’ and near by the most infamous cards of wicked poison-makers! — *Round Table*, New York, July 9, 1864.

miscellaneous of John Brown,' with ten or twelve lines of biography; 'Character of Abraham Lincoln,' with half a page of biography; 'The Grave of Lincoln;' 'A Tribute to Abraham Lincoln;' and the 'Last Inaugural of Lincoln,' with that curious rhyming passage —

Fondly do we hope,
Fervently do we pray,
That this mighty scourge of war
May speedily pass away.

We take the following extracts from another volume (the fourth of the same series):

The Great Rebellion was a war set on foot for the purpose of destroying the Government of the United States. . . . The Union men [at Fredericksburg] fought bravely, but a great many were killed.—*Page 57.*

When morning came, many a brave soldier was frozen to the ground. When Paul saw the terrible suffering, he felt that he was willing to make any sacrifice to put a stop to such horrors. But then he remembered that Justice, Truth, and Righteousness are more valuable than human life, and that it is better to fight for them than to yield to injustice and wickedness.—*Page 210.*

It was with great satisfaction that Paul saw the shells tear through the rebel ranks; not that he liked to see men killed, but because he wanted Right to triumph over Wrong.—*Page 211.*

Mr. Sanders (4, 38,) selects one of the passages from *Hiawatha* where a big stag is turned into a little roebuck, (made *famous* by Mr. Longfellow) according to the American system of literature —

Where the red deer herd together,
Kill for us a famous (?) roebuck,
Kill for us a deer with antlers.

He treats us to specimens of Gough, Lippard, Weeks ('Last Cruise of the Monitor,' 4, 89,) L. H. Whitney, ('Lincoln's Journey to his Inauguration,' 5, 394,) Greeley, Corwin, Emerson, Sumner, Seward, Paul Denton, H. H. Brownell, (an account of an eagle named Old Abe,) William D. Gallagher, with inversions like —

Long the boast that we are freemen
We have made and published wide.

He who has the truth and keeps it,
Keeps what not to him belongs,
But performs a selfish action,
That his fellow-mortal wrongs.

'Purity of Character' (5, 105) is selected from the Rev. Henry Ward Beecher, who compares this virtue to the bloom on a plum, or frosting on a pane of glass, which, if touched, is 'gone forever,' and 'can never be restored.' Pupils will see the absurdity of the comparison, and will ask whether the plum can be of any use as long as its virtuous bloom remains, and whether the removal of the frosting may not be of advantage. We have 'The Beautiful' (5, 232,) from E. H. Burrington, who asks—'Dost thou see Beauty in the violet's cup?' but has the violet a cup? or is it a cup-shaped flower?

Of course there are many excellent pieces in all the books we have mentioned, but this fact will not conciliate conservative men of the North, South, or West, who love truth and hate sectionalism. There are two or three good series of school reading books before the public which we are not now prepared to analyse. We have alluded to the sectional book of Pierpont prepared in 1826 and published in Massachusetts, but New Hampshire had the credit of issuing a book of a different character at Keene in 1826, in the excellent 'Literary and Scientific Class-book,' by Levi W. Leonard, a clergyman of scientific attainments living at Dublin in that State. Although useful in its day, this book would require extensive revision to adapt it to the present state of science.

REPORT

OF THE

President ^{of the} Board of Education

ELMIRA, N. Y.

ON THE

Compulsory Education Act.

